

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):**

**FY 2015 English Access Microscholarship Program**

**Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement**

**Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAALW-15-003**

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.421**

**Application Deadline: May 15, 2015**

**Executive Summary:**

The English Access Microscholarship Program (Access) provides a foundation of English language skills to bright, economically disadvantaged 13- to 20-year-olds worldwide through after school classes and intensive sessions in their countries. Access programs expose students to U.S. culture and democratic values, improve the students' potential to participate successfully in the socio-economic development of their countries, and increase their chances of competing for and participating in future U.S. exchange and study programs. The program will also support programming for alumni, teachers, directors, administrators and ministry officials that can be conducted in-country, in the region or in the U.S. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Office of English Language Programs (ECA/A/L), based on input from U.S. embassies' Public Affairs Sections (PAS), selects the schools or other in-country educational service providers that conduct the classes, as well as the participants who receive the scholarships. Because of the program's multiregional scope, the method of instruction, curriculum, textbooks, tests, hours of instruction, cost per student, etc., vary considerably from country to country, and sometimes within a single country. This open competition includes the expansion of programming to other relevant audiences and age ranges designated by ECA; training of teachers and in-country educational service providers by a corps of Teaching English as a Foreign Language experts whose duties include but are not limited to developing curriculum, conducting training and evaluating programs; establishment of an information sharing platform to exchange best practices; and the creation and maintenance of a financial management system. Under the close supervision of ECA/A/L, the Cooperative Agreement recipient will disburse funds to in-country educational service providers around the world and will conduct at least two workshops in the United States for selected teachers, directors, administrators, and ministry officials.

**A.) Program Description:**

**A.1) Authority:** Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

**A.2) Purpose:** The Access Program provides a foundation of English language skills to bright 13- to 20-year old students from disadvantaged sectors through after school English classes and intensive sessions in their countries. The Access Program also gives participants the opportunity to gain an appreciation for U.S. culture and democratic values, increase their ability to participate successfully in the socio-economic development of their countries, and improve their ability to compete to participate in future U.S. educational and exchange programs.

**A.3) Background:** The Access Program was launched in 2004 as a pilot program in countries of the Middle East and North Africa. In Fiscal Year 2006, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Office of English Language Programs assumed overall management of the Program. The program has expanded to become a key foundation element in the Bureau's continuum of exchanges to reach younger and more diverse audiences worldwide. Since its inception, over 110,000 students in more than 80 countries have participated in the Access Program.

**A.4) Program Administration:** The recipient organization will be responsible for fulfilling the project objectives and goals as outlined in the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document.

**A.5) Participants:** Participants will be identified and/or selected by the U.S. embassies and consulates in participating countries, based on allocations determined by ECA and with final selection made by ECA and U.S. embassies. Schools or other educational service providers that conduct the classes and in-service teacher training are also selected by U.S. embassies and consulates. Their teachers are also considered participants. (Note: throughout this NOFO, these schools, NGOs and other partners will be referred to as "in-country educational service providers.")

**A.6) Program Dates:** August 1, 2015 to June 30, 2019.

**A.7) Cooperative Agreement:** Under the auspices of the Cooperative Agreement, the Bureau's Office of English Language Programs is substantially involved in the Access Program, above and beyond routine monitoring. The Bureau provides overall program and policy design and direction with substantial involvement at all levels of the program, while U.S. embassies are responsible for working with selected in-country educational service providers on the in-country aspects of the program. ECA/A/L activities and responsibilities for the Access Program include but are not limited to:

- 1) Allocate program funds by region and country.
- 2) Select, based on input from U.S. embassies, Regional English Language Officers, and State Department Regional Bureaus, the in-country educational service providers that will provide English language instruction, cultural enhancement and leadership development to the Access students, programming for alumni, or professional development opportunities for teachers, directors, administrators and ministry officials;

- 3) Select, based on input from U.S. embassies and the in-country educational service providers, the students who receive the scholarships;
- 4) Approve proposals, official documentation, and reports for all programming under this cooperative agreement;
- 5) Determine, based on input from U.S. embassies, the amount and timing of financial disbursements by the recipient to the in-country educational service providers;
- 6) Serve, except for routine disbursements and other transactions approved in advance by ECA/A/L, as the recipient's primary point of contact and intermediary with the embassies and in-country educational service providers involved in the Access Program;
- 7) Select, based on input from U.S. embassies and the in-country educational service providers, the directors, teachers, administrators and ministry officials who participate in U.S.-based workshops;
- 8) Direct all phases of planning and development, and approve design, of the in-country and U.S.-based workshops and alumni activities;
- 9) Approve all major personnel changes in the recipient organization that are directly involved with this cooperative agreement.

In this Cooperative Agreement, U.S. embassies are also substantially involved in the program activities, above and beyond routine monitoring. U.S. embassies' activities and responsibilities for the Access Program include but are not limited to:

- 1) In collaboration with the relevant Regional English Language Officer, select the in-country educational service providers (schools, NGOs, in-country educational service providers, etc.) that will provide 1) English language instruction, cultural enhancement and leadership development to the Access scholarship students; 2) programming for alumni 3); and professional development opportunities for teachers, directors, administrators and ministry officials;
- 2) Determine the level of funding for each in-country educational service provider;
- 3) Recommend approval of proposals, official documentation, and reports for all programming under this cooperative agreement;
- 4) Collaborate with in-country educational service providers on the participant selection process and approve the selection of all participants;
- 5) Collaborate with in-country educational service providers in developing appropriate materials, curricula, enhancement activities and community service projects;
- 6) Participate in enhancement activities for Access students, when possible;
- 7) Propose participants for the workshops to ECA/A/L;
- 8) Conduct a site visit to each in-country educational service provider at least once a year;
- 9) Conduct regular review of the in-country educational service providers' programs and accounts;
- 10) Provide certificates signed by the U.S. Ambassador to the students at the beginning and end of the Access Program;
- 11) Collect, review and submit U.S. embassy approved written and financial reports

as well as alumni data from the in-country educational service providers.

In this Cooperative Agreement, in-country educational service providers are also substantially involved in the program activities. They may or may not choose to work with additional in-country educational service providers to meet programmatic and administrative needs. In-country educational service providers' activities and responsibilities for the Access Program include but are not limited to:

- 1) Plan and prepare programming closely with the U.S. embassy, Regional English Language Officer and ECA/A/L;
- 2) Draft proposals that meet program requirements and submit for approval to the U.S. embassy, Regional English Language Officer, and ECA/A/L;
- 3) Advertise and recruit participants for the scholarships, alumni programming, and professional development opportunities for teachers, directors, administrators and ministry officials;
- 4) Collaborate with the U.S. Embassy during the participant selection process;
- 5) Implement the program according to the verbal and written guidelines from the U.S. Embassy, approved proposals and signed official documents;
- 6) Nominate participants for the workshops and other professional development opportunities through the U.S. Embassy to ECA/A/L;
- 7) Regularly monitor and evaluate to ensure that the program is implemented in accordance with the relevant official documents as well as to highlight best practices and address challenges quickly;
- 8) Send invitations to the U.S. Embassy about special events, opportunities to visit and speak;
- 9) Provide certificates signed by the U.S. Ambassador to the students at the beginning and end of the Access Program;
- 10) Submit timely written and financial reports as well as alumni data according to the schedule outlined in official documents and when requested by the U.S. Embassy.

**A.8) Cooperative Agreement Recipient Responsibilities include but are not limited to:**

- 1) Fiscal Management:
  - a. The recipient organization will disburse funds to in-country educational service providers worldwide. ECA/A/L will provide written instructions to the recipient organization identifying the in-country educational service providers as well as the amount of funds to be disbursed to each. The award recipient will only disburse funds based on written instructions from ECA/A/L. Ideally, the recipient will disburse funds quarterly to each in-country educational service provider (some embassies work with more than one partner organization), but different disbursements may be authorized by ECA/A/L. The cooperating agency will work with ECA/A/L, U.S. embassies, and in-country educational service providers to determine the most efficient means of disbursement.
  - b. In response to Executive Order 13224 which requires U.S. organizations

to verify that they are not providing and will not knowingly provide material support or resources to any individual or entity that appears on the Master List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons maintained by the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) or has been designated by the United States Sanctions Committee (UNSC) established under UNSC Resolution 1267 for individuals or entities that are linked to terrorists or terrorist organizations, the recipient organization must collect and vet the in-country educational service providers' information and the names of its senior staff against these, and similar, lists.

- c. The recipient will collect, review and seek revisions to proposals.
- d. The recipient will draft and finalize official documentation, e.g. subawards, before disbursing funds.
- e. The recipient will collect, review, and seek revisions to written and financial reports from the in-country educational service providers on a schedule agreed to by the U.S. embassies and their providers.
- f. The recipient organization must track the entire process, e.g. proposals, official documents, reports and the disbursements in addition to sending reminders about when reports are due and overdue.
- g. The recipient organization should refer to the final federal assistance award agreement for report submission requirements.
- h. The recipient organization will help coordinate Educational Consultants who will work closely with the Office of English Language Programs on resource development and programmatic activities. These consultants will include a corps of Teaching English as a Foreign Language experts who will conduct training for teachers and providers, develop curricula for training and evaluate programs on an as needed basis.
- i. The recipient will support professional development opportunities for teachers, directors, administrators and ministry officials that can be conducted in-country, in the region, or in the U.S. The training will be requested by U.S. embassies and approved by ECA/A/L.
- j. The recipient will support programming for Access alumni, which can be conducted in-country, in the region, or in the U.S.
- k. The recipient will support programming for other relevant audiences, program lengths and age ranges as designated by ECA.

2) U.S. Exchange Component (workshops):

- a. Workshops may be conducted by the recipient or subawarded through an open competition. Subrecipients may include non-profits, non-governmental organizations, and accredited colleges and universities for the workshops. The recipient will plan, conduct, and fund at least two workshops in the United States for selected ministry officials, administrators, directors and teachers.
- b. At least two workshops (approximately two weeks or more in duration) in the U.S. will be conducted for approximately 25 teachers, directors, administrators and ministry officials in each workshop, chosen by

ECA/A/L from nominations by embassies. The workshops will focus on providing participants the most current teaching methods, exposure to relevant educational technology, education policy and education administration in addition to firsthand exposure to the U.S. The latter may include an academic component on U.S. history, society and culture and attendance at conferences related to the ESL/EFL field.

- c. The recipient organization will assume overall logistical responsibility for arrangements during participants' time in the U.S., including all travel arrangements from the participants' home cities to the U.S., domestic travel within the U.S. and appropriate accommodations during all phases of the program.
- 3) Seek Guidance and Clearance from ECA/A/L: The recipient will request guidance and clearance on all aspects of the program, which includes but is not limited to:
- a. Personnel: The recipient will seek approval of critical personnel changes from ECA/A/L.
  - b. Educational Materials: At ECA/A/L's request and guidance, the recipient will seek opportunities to collaborate with other ECA programs and resources. This may include printing and shipping of ECA/A/L-produced educational materials.
  - c. Digital learning resources: As requested by ECA/A/L, the recipient will conduct an open competition to develop Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and/or other digital learning resources for English language learning; coordinate and support the deployment of these resources overseas, including the purchase and shipment of equipment, as necessary; and manage professional development activities to allow educators to use these products most effectively abroad.
  - d. Shipment of books and materials: The recipient will purchase and ship books and materials to the providers in the field as required. ECA/A/L will authorize the purchases and shipments as necessary based on program requirements.
  - e. Publications: The recipient will draft and clear all public advertisements, newsletters, and websites with ECA/A/L before development and dissemination to ensure proper identification with the U.S. Department of State.
  - f. Educational Consultants: The recipient will help coordinate Educational Consultants who will work closely with the Office of English Language Programs on resource development and programmatic activities. The recipient also will contract with Teaching English as a Foreign Language expert consultants, as needed, whose duties will include, but are not limited to, developing curriculum, conducting training and evaluating programs.
  - g. Communication Strategy: The recipient will develop and implement a strategic communication plan in close coordination with ECA/A/L.
  - h. Additional Programming: The recipient will support in-country, regional or U.S. programming for alumni, teachers, directors, administrators and

ministry officials as requested by ECA/A/L. The recipient will support programming for other relevant audiences and age ranges as designated by ECA/A/L.

- i. Data Management: The recipient will create and maintain a financial management system related to this cooperative agreement.
- j. Information Sharing Platform: The recipient will create and maintain at least one information sharing platform for best practices to be shared with students, teachers, administrators, and other relevant audiences designated by ECA.

#### **B.) Federal Award Information:**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under Section A above.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** 2015

**Approximate Total Funding:** Up to \$25 million

**Approximate Number of Awards:** 1

**Approximate Average Award:** Up to \$25 million

**Floor of Award Range:** None

**Ceiling of Award Range:** Up to \$25 million

**Anticipated Award Date:** August 1, 2015

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2019

**Additional Information:** Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again. Noting the Bureau reserves the right to increase or decrease funding amounts in subsequent renewal awards – based on successful performance and availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years.

#### **C.) Eligibility Information:**

**C.1. Eligible applicants:** Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

**C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds:** There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts

200 and 600, entitled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards . In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

**C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:**

Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount up to \$25,000,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

**D.) Application and Submission Information:**

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

**D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:**

Please contact at the Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, SA-5, 4H14, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, telephone (202)632-9276, fax (202)632-6490, or email [accessprogram@state.gov](mailto:accessprogram@state.gov) to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Melissa Fernandez, Program Officer, and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

**D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:**

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.



**D.2a.** Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. “Application Deadline and Method of Submission” section below.

**D.3a.** You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

**D.3b.** All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document, and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

**D.3c.** All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

**D.3d.** You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

**D.3e.** In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one- page

description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

**D.3f.** If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

**D.3g.** All ECA awards recipient organizations must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing [www.GrantSolutions.gov](http://www.GrantSolutions.gov). To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click “Getting Started-Request a User Account” at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

**D.3h. ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-44, Suite 668

301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

### **D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines**

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

### **D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame),

the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

**Please note:** Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

**D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component:** ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain

engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our [International Exchange Alumni](#) space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

**D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients:** All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

**D.3m.** Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

**D.3n.** Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

**D.3o.** Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- 1) Program costs for the after school and intensive sessions of the scholarship program including, but not limited to, instruction, materials, venue rental, accommodations, transportation and meals.
- 2) Costs associated with teacher training and alumni activities including, but not limited to, instruction, materials, venue rental, accommodations, transportation and meals.
- 3) Costs associated with planning, conducting, and funding at least two workshops in the United States for approximately two weeks or more in duration for approximately 50 select teachers, directors, administrators, and ministry officials. Costs should at minimum include: the participants' international and domestic transportation, U.S. per diem, space rental, workshop materials, participants' pre-departure costs such as visa costs, necessary travel to obtain visas, etc.
- 4) *Administrative Costs:*
  - a. Staff salaries and benefits (each staff member and his/her position must be listed separately). Please also note the percentage of his/her total time spent on this program.
  - b. Communication costs (e.g. fax, telephone, postage, communication equipment, etc.)

- c. Office supplies
- d. Printing and duplication costs
- e. A-133 Audit fees
- f. Other direct costs; and
- g. Indirect costs.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

**D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:**

Application Deadline Date: Friday, May 15, 2015

Method of Submission:

Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Find" portion of the system.

**PLEASE NOTE:** ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

**It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.**

**D.3r.** Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

## **E.) Application Review Information**

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

### **E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA**

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1) *Quality of the program idea and program planning:* Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Detailed

agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the Program overview and guidelines described above.

- 2) *Ability to achieve program objectives and institutional capacity:* Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.
- 3) *Institution's Record/Ability:* Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by the Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 4) *Support of Diversity:* Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.
- 5) *Project Evaluation:* Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.
- 6) *Follow-on Activities:* Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) which insures that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.
- 7) *Cost-effectiveness and Cost-Sharing:* The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

## **F.) Award Administration Information**

### **F.1a. Award Notices:**

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive an Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.



Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

**F.1b.** The following additional requirements apply to this project:

All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza. Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Rachel Rubin, at telephone 202-647-4558 or [rubinre@state.gov](mailto:rubinre@state.gov) for additional information.

**F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:**

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following:

Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars.)

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov) website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.

<http://fa.statebuy.state.gov>

**F.3. Reporting Requirements:** You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

*Mandatory:*

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: [http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=20&menu\\_id=68](http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68). The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help

Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov). The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: [FFATAECA@state.gov](mailto:FFATAECA@state.gov). This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's [USAspending.gov](http://USAspending.gov) website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D. Application and Submission Instructions (D.3.d.3) above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

#### **Additional Program Data Requirements:**

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

#### **G. Agency Contacts**

For questions about this announcement, contact: Melissa Fernandez, U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, SA-5, 4H14, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone (202)632-9276 or [accessprogram@state.gov](mailto:accessprogram@state.gov)

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

**H. Other Information:**

**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F.3 Reporting Requirements above.

Evan Ryan

March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State